

## Did America invade the Beatles as they invaded America? - a comparative analysis on the Beatles' accent in former and later years

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**Resumo:** O presente trabalho busca entender porque alguns cantores britânicos soam como americanos quando cantam, usando, como exemplo, a banda de Liverpool The Beatles. Desta forma, o trabalho pretende verificar se existe alguma mudança no sotaque dos cantores do início ao final da carreira de The Beatles. De forma a ter uma visão geral da banda, oito músicas de dois diferentes álbuns, que representam duas diferentes fases da banda – With the Beatles (1963) e Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967) – foram analisadas e comparadas levando em conta as variantes de dois fonemas (as consoantes r e t) nas duas variantes padrão do inglês americano e do inglês britânico. Os resultados sugerem que, apesar de haver oscilações entre os sotaques americanos e britânicos em ambos os álbuns, With the Beatles possui maior incidência de palavras pronunciadas em sotaque americano em relação a Sgt. Pepper's. A partir disso, este artigo discute algumas possíveis

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razões para essas mudanças na pronúncia e tenta refletir sobre esse fenômeno relacionando-o ao movimento da Invasão Britânica nos Estados Unidos nos anos 60.

**Palavras-chave:** Sotaques americano e britânico. Oscilação de sotaques. The Beatles.

**Abstract:** The present study aims to understand why some British singers sound like Americans when they sing, using, as an example, the Liverpool band The Beatles. Also, it tends to verify if there are any accent changes in the beginning and in the end of The Beatles' career. In order to have an overview of the band, eight songs from two different albums, which represent those two different phases of the band – With the Beatles (1963) and Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967) – were analyzed and compared taking into account the variants of two phonemes (the consonants r and t) in the standard varieties of English from America and Britain. Findings suggest that, although there are oscillations between American and British accents in both albums, With the Beatles has more incidences of words pronounced with an American accent than Sgt. Pepper's. Therefore, the paper discusses some possible reasons for these changes in accent and tries to reflect about this phenomenon relating it to the movement of British Invasion in the USA in the 60's.

**Keywords:** British and American accents. Oscillation in accents. The Beatles.

## Introduction

One aspect that can be noticed and that provokes strangeness when it comes to British music is that, many times, singers who have a very strong British accent when speaking lose it when they sing. It is very common to observe singers from Britain sound like Americans in their songs, what makes it difficult to tell only by listening whether they are British or not. When we listen to several singers like Amy Winehouse, Mick Jagger, Adele, Elton John and many others, we notice that many times they sing using phonological features that can be related to the general American pronunciation, sometimes imitating them completely, and others oscillating between the two accents. There are several different explanations that can be used for these cases: it can be something related to phonological features, social background, commercial purposes, musical rhythm, cultural matters or others.

This study intends to analyze this phenomenon focusing on the band The Beatles, which seems to be a very representative case for this change in accent, and also a case in which we can notice many cultural and social reasons that act behind this change. We believe that by looking at their pronunciation and by analyzing it, searching for different possible explanations for the case, we may have a greater picture of cultural movements of the 60's – especially the British Invasion – and the changes occurred in British music – especially British rock – in terms of cultural status and identity. We believe that the accents might

have been much more Americanized in the beginning of their career – when they were trying to succeed in the United States – and much more natural after they were already worldwide famous.

Therefore, our study intends to analyze the changes and oscillations in accent – both in the beginning and at the end of The Beatles' career – in order to check if there are differences in pronunciation and, then, try to provide hypotheses of why this happens. Thus, we will analyze eight different songs from the albums *With the Beatles* (1963) and *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), both of which were great landmarks in The Beatles' career. The first one, *With the Beatles* (1963), was their second studio album and first album released in North America, a fact that may have influenced the singers' accents in their songs. On the other hand, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) was The Beatles' eighth studio album, which gave the band four Grammy awards in 1998. Thinking about the importance of those two albums and their differences concerning their time of launch, we decided to analyze four songs from each album, taking into account these and other cultural aspects of the band and of the British society of the time to think about the accents performed by them in their songs.

As British and American accents, in this study, we will consider the standard accents from these two countries, the Received Pronunciation and the General American English Pronunciation, respectively. Received Pronunciation (RP), also called the BBC's accent, is considered the British "standard" dialect, in which the expression "received" means "generally accepted". Despite the fact that it is the standard accent, less than 3% of the people in Britain speak RP in a pure form. On the other hand, the General American English Pronunciation (GA), which is the "standard" dialect of the USA, heard in national news, is the accent used by the majority of the population of the United States. In this study, we will analyze two key points of the differences between RP and GA accents: the different variants of the consonants <r> and <t>.

By analyzing these features in The Beatles' songs, our goals are to see whether there is this Americanization, whether there are any differences in this Americanization between the beginning of their career and their later years and whether there are oscillations between the two accents on their songs. Our research expectations are to be able to find positive answers for these questions and, then, we intend to analyze how this change can relate to Beatles' history and their influence in culture, concerning the British Invasion of which they

were part. Besides that, we want to reflect about how these oscillations relate to many other factors like cultural, commercial and phonological factors, besides issues like identity and belonging and the difference between cover and original songs.

## **The Beatles**

The Beatles was a British rock band which emerged in Liverpool in 1960, although the most known formation of the band was consolidated only in 1962 with the components John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison e Ringo Starr. The Liverpool band started its career playing in some night houses from Hamburg, in Germany, where they drew the public's attention for the first time, especially the attention of their future businessman, Brian Epstein, who, by the time, was the owner of a record store. Epstein saw the potential of the four boys and decided to work with them. His first act as the band's businessman was to change their costumes – The Beatles began to use modern suits passing the image of “behaved boys”. In 1962, George Martin signed contract with the band as their musical producer (SARMENTO, 2006).

The Beatles' first album, entitled Please, Please Me, was released in 1963 and reached the first place in the United Kingdom charts. With this album, they became a great success not only in the UK, but also in other countries in Europe. It was time to conquer also America, mostly the USA.

### *British Invasion and Beatlemania: The Beatles arrive in the USA*

Brian Epstein, after much insisting, convinced Capitol Records to release the compact of I wanna hold your hand/I saw her standing there in the USA on December 26th, 1963. In 1964, I wanna hold your hand reached the first place in the USA charts. When the band arrived in the country in 1964 to conduct a tour, the fans' harassment was huge, which could be proved in the interview that the band gave on TV for the Ed Sullivan Show. 73 million people watched the show – it is considered until nowadays one of the biggest audiences from the USA (SARMENTO, 2006). At that time, the “Beatlemania” was consolidated. This word, which emerged in 1963 in a performance for the Sunday Night at the London Palladium TV show, defines the intense love and hysteria felt by The Beatles' fans. This was the first global musical phenomenon:

Ian Inglis argued that during The Beatles early years (1963–mid-1966), their “achievements ... departed relatively little in substance from the experiences of other leading performers in popular music,” but “the difference lay in the size and scale of their success, framed within the phenomenon which became known as Beatlemania. (DRIVER, 2007, p. 21–22).

Having reached America, The Beatles were the leaders of the movement of British Invasion, the period when British bands started to be on the top of American charts. American rock was weak by that time, even though the genre was born in the country. Robert Chelton (1965 apud DRIVER, 2007, p. 33) commented in The New York Times that the British Invasion was a “[reinvigoration] of American musical thinking and activity.” The Beatles turned to be the most powerful and successful band of the bands related to the British Invasion, which made things change, also for the American bands: “The Beatles could not be duplicated again, and especially not by an American band [...]” (DRIVER, 2007, p. 33).

According to Sarmiento (2006), at this initial time of the band, they made a cultural hybrid rock n’ roll, because it carried a contradiction: at the same time that they were against the dominant culture, against the technicality and the industrialism, they were a mass culture phenomenon that depended upon the capitalist society to develop and spread around the world. It is important to know it because in their later years, The Beatles would be much closer to the counterculture and their music would change.

### *Climax and The End*

After their tour in America and after they became famous around the world, The Beatles started to change their style; they began to produce a more distinctive sound with a more introspective trend using different musical instruments, like the zither, which can be seen in the album Beatles For Sale and so on. Their contact with Bob Dylan in the USA also influenced their new style: they were more engaged in intuitive experimentation, in contestation and in their personal analysis (SARMENTO, 2006).

Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band, an album from 1967, was their peak as artists; it was considered a masterpiece and a conceptual album. At that time, the arrangements that they used in their songs were so complex and elaborated that they could not perform it in live

action. Also, the fans' hysteria contributed to their decision to not perform shows in live action anymore (Ibid.).

However, in August 1967, Brian Epstein died and the band was lost, as they did not know how to manage the band's business. In 1968, there were some disagreements in the band when recording an album, so in 1970 Paul McCartney declared the end of The Beatles. Each of the four members continued in a solo career, but John Lennon was murdered in 1980 by a fan and, in 2001, George Harrison died of cancer. Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr continue their careers until today.

### **Some differences between the pronunciation of consonants in British and American English accents**

In order to understand the two phases of The Beatles' career – the time when they started to be famous in America and the time when the band was more artistically developed –, we analyzed two of the major differences between Received Pronunciation (RP), the British standard accent, and General American English Pronunciation (GA), the American standard accent: the consonant sounds for the letters <r> and <t>.

#### *Rhotic Accent*

One of the most noticeable difference between Received Pronunciation accent and General American English Pronunciation accent is rhotacization.

An accent is considered rhotic when it permits the letter <r> to be pronounced after a vowel (LADEFOGED; JOHNSON, 2010). The rhotic accent, mostly in the English language, is produced as a retroflex approximant – although there are at least two other ways to pronounce it: as an alveolar approximant or as an alveolar flap (GÓMEZ, 2009). In this study, it was determined to use the phoneme /r/ to all these three variants. The rhotic accent can be also called “post-vocalic r” or “r-coloring”.

Taking rhotacization into account, the American accent is a rhotic accent, except in the New York and Boston area, because, in this accent, the <r> after a vowel is pronounced. On the other hand, the British accent is considered a non-rhotic accent, except in Scotland and Ireland, where they tend to drop the <r> in pronunciation when it is placed after a vowel (LADEFOGED; JOHNSON, 2010; GÓMEZ, 2009;



HOSSEINZADEH; KAMBUZIYA; SHARIATI, 2015). In the table below (Table 1), there are some examples that show the differences between the rhotic accent (GA) and the non-rhotic accent (RP):

Table 1. Differences between Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA) accents

	Received Pronunciation	General American
Hard	[hɑ:d]	[hɑ:rd]
Car	[ka:]	[ka:r]

Source: HOSSEINZADEH; KAMBUZIYA; SHARIATI; 2015.

Paco Gómez (2009) explains this difference historically and shows how it is related to social reasons. According to him, at the time of the American Revolution, there was no difference between the pronunciation of an American and of a British person. It was in the eighteenth century that Received Pronunciation started to be well-made and to be different from the American accent. In that century, the upper classes of Southern England started to remove the rhotic accent as a way of marking class distinction. Bit by bit, it became fashionable in middle classes to drop the post-vocalic r. However, Scotland and Ireland did not adopt the non-rhotic accent because these regions were composed mainly of lower working classes. In America, the hypothetical reason for the exceptions in New York and in Boston areas is their possible strong relation with British people.

### *The Letter <t>*

Another remarkable difference between Received Pronunciation and General American is the pronunciation of the letter <t>. In the British standard accent, the letter <t> is always pronounced as [t], either at the beginning, at the middle or at the end of the word. However, in American standard accent, the pronunciation of <t> is different in some contexts.

Usually, when the letter <t> occurs after a stressed vowel and before an unstressed syllable in which there is not a nasal sound, the <t> is pronounced as a voiced sound which, for some speakers, will sound like [d] (LADEFOGED; JOHNSON, 2010). Besides, in an intervocalic position, when the first vowel is stressed, the <t> is sometimes pronounced as

a quick alveolar tap, [ɾ]. This alveolar tap also appears when words are linked together in colloquial speech. The sound [t] can be completely omitted in the presence of a stressed vowel followed by [n] in General American English Pronunciation (GÓMEZ, 2009). The examples in Table 2 demonstrate the differences between American and British accents, explained before in the pronunciation of <t>.

Table 2: Differences in the pronunciation of the letter <t> between RP and GA accents

	Received Pronunciation	General American
Italy	[ˈɪtəli]	[ˈɪdəli]
writer	[ˈraɪtə]	[ˈraɪrər]
Centre	[ˈsɛntə]	[ˈsɛnə]

Source: HOSSEINZADEH; KAMBUZIYA; SHARIATI; 2015.

## Methodology

Many British singers sound like Americans when they sing because of many reasons. When it comes to British rock, it is noticeable that when the singers are trying to reach a larger audience and when they are largely influenced by American singers, they will probably sound more like Americans. On the other hand, when there is an attempt to sing in a unique way or when it is safer to show their roots, it is possible that their sound does not get so Americanized. By analyzing the pronunciation in The Beatles' songs, we intended to check whether there are differences in their accents between the beginning of their career (when they were trying to succeed in America) and the time when they were already very famous worldwide (and British rock was already consolidated). Our goal was to see whether there is a change in time, whether one type of pronunciation predominated over the other depending on the stage of the Beatles' career and whether there are oscillations between the pronunciations.

In order to analyze that, we focused on some differences between the British and the American varieties of English in terms of speech, and we chose some Beatles' songs to analyze the way they pronounce the words. With this procedure, we intended to be able to interpret their



differences in production through time and throughout the songs that were chosen.

### *The Data*

For our analysis, we chose as our corpus eight songs by The Beatles that were analyzed in order to check the features that were worked on. Four of the chosen songs are from the album *With the Beatles* (1963) and the other four are from the album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), the first one related to the "Beatlemania phase" and the second related to the "psychedelic phase", closer to their end. By choosing these different albums, we hope that we can establish a pattern. Taking into account that the four Beatles were from Liverpool and spoke with an unmistakable accent, we tried to see in what context "Americanization" happens and in what context they sound British, trying to verify the hypothesis that they sound more American in their beginning and more British as they develop their career.

In the album *With the Beatles*, the songs chosen for analysis were *Don't Bother Me*, *Please Mr. Postman*, *Roll Over Beethoven* and *I Wanna Be Your Man*. This album was very important because it was the first album to sell millions of copies in the U.K. and it maintained and guaranteed the position that the Beatles had already achieved at the top of the British charts (EASLEA, 2005). It was their second album (after *Please, Please Me*, their debut album), released when The Beatles were already famous in England, though still unknown in the US. *With the Beatles* was then released in America with the name *Meet the Beatles* and with some changes in the track list. This was the first step for The Beatles to invade America. Their massive success in the U.S. would come in the following year with the album *A Hard Day's Night*, but the germ for the British Invasion was already there in 1963 (Ibid.).

Out of the fourteen tracks of *With the Beatles*, seven are covers, mostly of American singers and groups, and the other seven tracks are mostly composed by the well-known duet Lennon-McCartney (ERLEWINE, 2015). For our analysis, we chose two covers (*Please Mr. Postman*, first recorded by the American group The Carpenters; *Roll Over Beethoven*, first recorded by the American singer and player Chuck Berry) and two original songs (*Don't Bother Me*, first song composed by George Harrison and *I Wanna Be Your Man*, composed by Lennon-McCartney). With this selection of songs, we intended to have a

panorama in order to notice the difference, concerning their accent, between their realizations in Beatles’ original songs and in covers of American singers.

In the album Sgt. Pepper’ Lonely Hearts Club Band, the tracks that were analyzed are Getting better, She’s Leaving Home, When I’m Sixty-Four and Lovely Rita. This album, from 1967, is if not the greatest at least the most important of The Beatles’ albums. It represented a huge enlargement of their horizons and a very bold creation. It shows their maturity in the search for new experimentations and it is considered by many a masterpiece. It was their eighth album and represents their peak. After its release, it stayed fifteen weeks at the top of Billboard (MACDONALD, 2005). Because of its importance and uniqueness and because it represents an era in which they were already making a huge success in America and all over the world, we chose songs from this album for our analysis. All of the four songs we chose were composed by Lennon-McCartney and sang by McCartney.

Results

After the two albums were analyzed, it became noticeable that the singers do not maintain the same accent in an entire song; they mix some features from their native accent, a British accent, with an American one. Taking into account two consonants which are produced in different ways with the British standard accent and with the American standard accent, the consonants <r> and <t>, this analysis identified many oscillations of accents in songs from the two albums.

In the album released in 1963, With the Beatles, there are more oscillations of accents than in the album Sgt. Pepper’ Lonely Hearts Club Band, even though the words pronounced with the American accent, the General American English Pronunciation, are in a larger number than the words with the British Accent, the Received Pronunciation. Beyond that, songs from With the Beatles which are covers from American singers, such as Roll Over Beethoven and Please Mister Postman, are the songs in which the General American accent is in highlights and more words were identified by this analysis

GA realization of <r> Rhotic accent	Never – Her – Bother
GA realization of <t>	Right – Night – Want
RP realization of <r> Non-rhotic accent	Near – Here – Girl – For – Bother

Table 4: Analysis of the song Please Mr. Postman

GA realization of <r> <u>Rhotic accent</u>	Mister – Letter – For – Far There – Card – Tears – Better Deliver – Heard – Sooner – More Returning
GA realization of <t>	Wait a minute – Wait – Letter Waiting – Patiently – Better <u>Gotta</u>
RP realization of <r> <u>Non-rhotic accent</u>	Letter – Better – Girlfriend – Girl Word – Here
RP realization of <t>	Letter – Better – Waiting

Table 5: Analysis of the song Roll Over Beethoven

GA realization of letter <r> <u>Rhotic accent</u>	Letter – Hear – Record – Over Writer – Your – Lover – Early Morning – <u>Warmin</u> – Worm Partner – Never
GA realization of <t>	Write – Little – Letter – <u>Gotta</u>
RP realization of <r> <u>Non-rhotic accent</u>	Heart – Over

Table 6: Analysis of the song I wanna be your man

GA realization of <r> <u>Rhotic accent</u>	Lover – Your – Other – Understand
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In the Sgt. Pepper' Lonely Hearts Club Band album, there are also oscillations between the American and the British pronunciations, but it is noticeable that the oscillations are fewer and the majority of the analyzed words seem to be pronounced according to the Received Pronunciation, which is their natural accent. The words pronounced according to their natural pronunciation are in larger quantity than in the album With the Beatles, but still there are several words pronounced according to the General American English Pronunciation. There was no song in which they maintain only one pattern, all of the songs are in

a mixed variety of English. There were cases in which the same word or expression was pronounced in different accents within the same songs. In other cases there was this oscillation in the same expression, such as in the expression “getting better” from the song with the same name, in which sometimes the word “getting” was pronounced according to the General American English Pronunciation and the word “better” was pronounced according to the Received Pronunciation.

The results of our analysis of the songs from this album can be seen on the tables below:

Table 7: Analysis of the song Getting Better

RP realization of <r> Non- <u>rhotic</u> accent	Better – Weren’t – Teachers More – Worse – Word – Heard Apart
RP realization of <t>	Getting – Better – Little
GA realization <r> <u>Rhotic</u> accent	Turning – Her
RP realization of <r> Non- <u>rhotic</u> accent	Morning – More – Door Downstairs – Turning Backdoor – Letter – There – Stairs – Handkerchief – Years Father – Ourselves – Hard – For Motor
RP realization <t>	Silently – Letter – Waiting Treat us – Meeting
GA realization of <r> <u>Rhotic</u> accent	After – Our – Never – Far

Table 9: Analysis of the song When I’m Sixty-Four

RP realization of <r> Non- <u>rhotic</u> accent	Older – Hair – Years – Birthday Quarter – Door – Four – Word Sweater – Fireside – Mornings For – Garden – More – Summer Postcard – yours – Form Evermore
RP realization of <t>	Bottle – Cottage – Starting What you – Knit a – Sweater Point of
GA realization <r> <u>Rhotic</u> accent	Four – Dear – Your

Table 10: Analysis of the song Lovely Rita

RP realization of <r> Non-rhotic accent	Meter – Dark – heart – Your Parking – Older – Shoulder Are – Dinner – Nearly
RP realization of <t>	Rita – Meter – Sitting Without you
GA realization of <r> Rhotic accent	Sister
GA realization of <t>	Litter

## Analysis and Discussion

The data analyzed showed that there is always an oscillation between the two accents in the songs. In none of them the realizations were only in Received Pronunciation or only in General American; their pronunciation was mixed between the two accents. According to Crystal (2009), it is difficult for a singer to maintain the same accent in an entire song: “[...] in hardly any case do singers use a consistent regional accent throughout the whole song. Mixed accents seem to be the norm”. However, even though there are these oscillations everywhere, it is noticeable that in the first album analyzed, With the Beatles, the pattern tended much more to the American realization and, in the second album, it tended to the Received Pronunciation. These results were already expected and it is possible to analyze them having in mind the Beatles’ history, concerning their influence in culture and, mainly, the British Invasion in America. Of course, the reasons cannot be totally discovered, because there are many factors that are contributing to the way they speak a determined word. Hence, it is not possible to clearly state a fixed reason for this phenomenon. What we can do is try to relate this phonological issue with a cultural point of view, so that we understand how the pronunciation aspect can be important to reflect about the music market and the popular music culture.

Concerning their style and their music, the Beatles changed a lot among the years. Between 1963 (date of the first analyzed album) and 1967 (the second analyzed album), their sound, their style and their

aspirations had changed much. This may have influenced the way they sang their songs. In 1963, according to Hecl (2006), the Beatles were still at their beginning; *With the Beatles* was their second album and they were still not very famous in America, although they already had some prestige in England. During this time they were pursuing the success that would come in 1964. Taking into account the fact that they were trying to succeed in America (where the big music market was), it is natural that they sound more Americanized, creating a more mainstream kind of music. The fact that the musicians who inspired them were mainly American rock n' roll musicians is also considerable. About that, Hecl (Ibid., p. 20) says that they were influenced by "black music – rock and roll, rhythm & blues, doo-wop etc – and skiffle", which are, excepting skiffle, only American genres. Also, the artists who inspired them were mainly Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Elvis Presley, all of them American singers.

The rock'n'roll genre was born in the fifties in the United States, so the references they had were mainly from there, because the United Kingdom did not have a relevant rock n' roll tradition until then. Liverpool was a port town, so the blues and rock'n'roll American discs reached the city before they reached the capital, a fact that could be in favor of the young boys from Liverpool (SARMENTO, 2006). It is noticeable that many of their first songs were covers; according to Hecl (2006), out of 100 songs recorded between 1962 and 1965, 24 were cover versions. In *With the Beatles*, half of the album is composed by cover songs. This number would decrease through the years, as they started to focus on original songs. However, at this first moment, it was very common to try to imitate American singers, not necessarily intentionally, as Ólafsson (2012, p. 10) points out:

British musicians were reacting to music they regarded as cool; therefore, consciously imitating a certain dialect may not have been a part of their agenda. 'Coolness' is associated more with feelings, emotions, and the unconscious, as opposed to the rational and logical mindset of the speech-conscious and prestige-orientated mind.

The fact that British singers changed their accent was not totally intentional, but it happened to the Beatles, who in the album *With the Beatles* pronounced many words in the General American English Pronunciation, as this analysis can show.

According to Paul Verhaar (2013), the British Invasion, which was



led by the Beatles, lasted from 1964 to 1966, but then, after the Beatles succeeded, there was less motivation for them and for other British bands to follow the American pattern. That is due to the fact that then it was possible to talk about a truly British rock. Therefore, at a first moment we can talk about the British Invasion to explain what The Beatles represented, but it is not possible to do that for the major part of their career, because they distanced much from whom they were and the kind of music they made at the beginning. This was a progressive change; as time went by, they started to change some aspects of their music: they started to invest in original composition rather than covers, to make their lyrics smarter, to talk about other subjects rather than love (because in the first album almost every song is about love) and to elaborate more their melodies. Black music influence started to be felt less and something new started rising (HECL, 2006).

The summit of this search for something more elaborated and original was in the album Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, which we analyzed. It is visible that this album belongs to a totally different context from With the Beatles. The Beatles were already very famous and the British Invasion was consolidated, so they were able to search for more original things in their career, since there was not that need for Americanization anymore. In this album, they are not composing only for the mainstream, but they have a cultural, artistic purpose. Gammond (apud HECL, 2006, p. 21) postulates that this album is "a mixture of surrealism, mysticism, vaudeville, and rock that took pop music to new levels of inventiveness". This can be a reason for the fact that the band sound more British than in the other album. Since they succeeded as they wanted, they could then search for their own identity and, besides that, they were progressively more mature in the way they thought about music.

These aspects related to their pronunciation are also a matter of identity. Firstly, because they sing in the way they identify with. The listening of music will influence the way they think about music. According to Frith (2011), music constructs our identity and the direct experiences proportioned by music enable people to cross borders and define their place in "imaginative cultural narratives". Hence, in their beginning, The Beatles identified themselves with what was being made in America. It was not just a matter of selling, but also of identification. Frith (Ibid., p. 110) also postulates that

It is in deciding – playing and hearing what sounds right [...] that we both express ourselves, our own sense of rightness, and suborn ourselves, lose ourselves, in an act of participation.

His theory may also explain the posterior changes. As the band started to change, the singers started looking for a way of better expressing themselves, a way of expressing their new intentions and what sounded “right” for them. About the beginning of their changes and experimentations related to identity, Hecl (2006, p. 27) says that, influenced by the hippie culture (the new movement The Beatles identified with),

[...] they began to regard music as a spiritual thing, as well as a powerful weapon. The Beatles wanted to change their style and, though they had still retained their old appearance and image so far, started to experiment not only with the music but also with the lyrics.

If we compare songs from With the Beatles and songs from Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band, the difference is noticeable, not only in accent, but in melody, in thematic and in structure. For instance, by comparing songs like I Wanna Be Your Man with When I’m Sixty-Four, they will seem to be from two different bands. The first one seems much more inspired on American early rock music, with its easy beat, fast pace and love thematic, while in the second song the melody is very different, it is influenced by music-hall, a theatrical British style (HECL, 2006), the lyrics are less obvious and the melody seems playful and original. Therefore, we can notice that the difference is not only in pronunciation, but also in several aspects of the song.

Although these issues can constitute ways of explaining this phenomenon, there are many factors that influence this process, so it is not possible to be sure about it, only to make hypotheses. Here, some other factors that can influence are listed:

a. The person who is singing is a factor that can influence a lot. There are songs sung by Paul, by George, by John and by Ringo, besides the harmony – when two or more members sing together. It is very likely that this has an influence because, although they came from the same place, since they are not the same person, their production will be different. In the first analyzed album, there was one sung by John Lennon, two by George and one by Ringo. In the second album, the four songs are sung by McCartney. In our study, we did not intend to consider this aspect, but for a more depth research, it would be essential

to take this into account.

b. Another influential factor – especially when it comes to the first analyzed album, *With the Beatles* – is the covers produced by them. In this album, seven of fourteen songs are covers, all of them from American singers. It is possible that, when they were singing truly American music, their pronunciation sounded like the ones of the original singers. This could influence the Americanization of their accent – a hypothesis that can lead to future studies. In the corpus we analyzed, there were two cover versions (*Please Mr. Postman* and *Roll Over Beethoven*) and indeed in both songs the number of words in American pronunciation was much larger than in the other songs.

c. According to Crystal (2009), there are phonetic reasons that could also influence this changing of accent when a person sings. Some features of the common speech tend to disappear when singing because they give place to musical characteristics: the intonation (that is replaced by melody), speech rhythm (replaced by the bit of the song) and vowel length (in many syllables they are elongated). The speed of the song is also another aspect to consider when talking about accents. In slower and calm songs, the words are better pronounced, so the accent becomes more neutral. However, Crystal (*Ibid.*) arguments that it is possible for singers to maintain their regional accents if they want to. The second phase of *The Beatles* is one proof of it.

d. Many other factors can also influence their speech, because accent – especially in a singing tone – is something oscillatory and influenced by uncountable reasons. Not everything can be tracked, for instance, their own intention cannot be totally discovered. Although we try to establish some reasons why they would sound more American or more British, not everything they thought or felt about this subject can be known theoretically. As an example of declared intention, according to Crystal (2009), there is something about accents that Paul McCartney said in an interview: “The Beatles tried to sing in an American accent in their beginning, but then they decided against it, because for them it looked ridiculous”. Considering all the factors that influence pronunciation, what the singer felt about it also counts.

## Conclusion

When analyzing two albums from different phases of *The Beatles*’ careers, *With the Beatles* (1963) and *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club*

Band (1967), we noticed that the differences that we can see in lyrics and style also happen in the accent. The results for this study showed that in the album *With the Beatles*, the rhotic accent appeared more times than in the *Sgt. Pepper's*, as well as the <t> consonant being pronounced as [d] or [ɾ] – characteristics of the General American English Pronunciation, the standard English of the US. On the other hand, the non-rhotic accent and the <t> consonant being pronounced as [t] had a higher number of occurrences in songs from *Sgt. Pepper's*. However, we have to understand that these variants of consonants are only a little example of the many noticeable variations

In order to understand this changing of accent, we tried to relate it *With the Beatles'* history, mostly with their success in the US. For example, the first album was released in a context in which the band was starting to be very famous and was trying to conquer America. Also, at that time, the British Invasion was happening, a phenomenon in which several British rock bands were making success in the US taking as influence some American singers from the early rock n' roll. Basically, they were giving back the rock to America. Together with the Rolling Stones, The Beatles were the leaders of this movement. Then, the fact that *With the Beatles* has some aspects from an American accent could be related with social, cultural and commercial reasons. It is possible that they tried to imitate an American accent not only to be known in the largest musical market in the world, but also to be part of a genre that was born in the US, the rock n roll. One sample of that is the many covers from American singers that they recorded in this album.

On the other hand, *Sgt. Pepper's* was released in a different moment, when The Beatles had already consolidated a name and a career, and had already conquered the world. At that moment they could focus on building their own identity, creating their own characteristics, marking their own regional accent in their songs.

Despite all these hypotheses, we cannot assure that these were their exact motives to use an American accent. Other reasons could be tested, such as the phonological reason, which says that when we sing some features from the speech are lost or replaced. It is important not to generalize and our results show us this information. When analyzing each album apart, we could notice a bigger standard: the oscillations between American and British accents. There was no song in which they maintained only one accent, each one has aspects from

both pronunciations. As Driver (2007, p. 33) comments in his article, The Beatles' music is in the middle of two countries, the US and the UK: "The primary effect is that Beatlemania is more closely connected with America, while their music remains somewhere stranded in the middle".

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